

Message Text

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SUBJECT: GOWON ON CORRUPTION AND OTHER SUBJECTS

SUMMARY: DURING AIRPORT PRESS CONFERENCE UPON RETURN FROM PRC, GOWON REACTED SHARPLY TO QUESTIONS ON CORRUPTION ISSUE, DECLARING THAT PUBLIC ATTACKS ON SENIOR ALLEGED WRONG-DOERS WERE REALLY AIMED AT HIM. AT LESST PARTIALLY HIS STRONG REACTION WAS PROBABLY DUE TO TIREDNESS AND TO INDIGNATION AT BEING GREETED WITH THIS SUBJECT IMMEDIATELY UPON ARRIVAL. HIS ANGER DID NOT APPEAR TO BE DIRECTED AGAINST NEWSPAPERS, BUT AGAINST "TROUBLE-MAKERS" WHO WERE USING PUBLIC MEDIA TO ENDANGER NATIONAL UNITY AND STABILITY. END SUMMARY.(9

1. DURING SEPTEMBER 12 AIRPORT PRESS CONFERENCE UPON

HIS RETURN FROM PRC VISIT, GOWON REACTED SHARPLY TO QUESTIONS ON CORRUPTION ISSUE. STATING THAT "IT WAS NOW CLEAR TO HIM THAT SOME PEOPLE WITH DESPICABLE CHARACTERS WERE NOW AIMING AT MAN ON TOP BY DAMAGING HIS LIEUTENANTS," GOWON URGED PRESS TO SUPPORT HIM

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IN ENSURING THAT NATION WAS NOT TORN INTO PIECES AND

THAT THESE "ATTACKS"
NOT BE ALLOWED TO TAMPER WITH
PEACE AND UNITY OF COUNTRY. GOWON INSISTED IT WAS
INTENTION OF FMG TO WIPE OUT CORRUPTION, BUT, CITING
PRESENT "DEPLORABLE" POPULAR ANTI-CORRUPTION TACTICS,
HE ADDED THAT "ONLY GOD COULD SAVE US AT RATE WE ARE
GOING".

2. IN OTHER COMMENTS GOWON: A) CALLED UPON NEWRULERS
OF ETHIOPIA TO SPARE EMPEROR'S LIFE AND ALLOW REST OF
HIS DAYS TO REMAIN PEACEFUL (REF LAGOS 8711); B) REFUSED
TO CONFIRM OR DENY RUMORS THAT CIVILIAN FEDERAL COM-
MISSIONERS WOULD BE REPLACED NEXT MONTH, TELLING REPORTERS
TO "WAIT AND SEE"; C) REFUSED TO COMMENT ON FATE OF
MAJOR GENERAL ADEBAYO ON GROUNDS QUESTION WAS PURELY
INTERNAL
AFFAIR OF ARMY; AND D) EXPRESSED HIS GRATITUDE
TO AND ADMIRATION FOR PRC (SEE SEPTTEL).

3. SKETCH WAS ONLY NEWSPAPER SO FAR TO COMMENT ON
GOWON WARNING, AGREEING THAT "CROOKS" SHOULD BE PUNISHED;
IT POINTED OUT, HOWEVER, THAT BEST WAY FOR FMG TO
REMOVE OPPORTUNITY FOR DISCONTENTED TO UTILIZE
CORRUPTION ISSUE WAS BY SETTING UP PERMANENT BOARD
OF INQUIRY TO INVESTIGATE CHARGES OF WRONG-DOING BY
GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. EDITORIALS IN OTHER PAPERS
AVOIDED THIS TOPIC, INSTEAD DISCUSSING (GENERALLY
FAVORABLY) GOWON'S PRC VISIT -- THOUGH SEVERAL USED
OPPORTUNITY TO CONTRAST HIGH LEVEL OF HONESTY OF
CHINESE OFFICIALS WITH NIGERIAN "BAD EGGS".

4. FOR REASONS WHICH ARE NOT CLEAR, SECURITY
PRECAUTIONS FOR GOWON'S ARRIVAL WERE MUCH HEAVIER THAN
IN PAST. ARMED TROOPS, RATHER THAN USUAL UNARMED
AIRPORT POLICE, GUARDED AIRPORT AND SOLDIERS IN BATTLE
DRESS SEARCHED CARS AT STRATEGIC POINTS ALONG ROUTE
FROM AIRPORT TO DODAN BARRACKS.

5. COMMENT: SHARPNESS OF GOWON REACTION TO QUESTIONING
ON CORRUPTION ISSUE SHOULD PROBABLY BE ATTRIBUTED AT
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LEAST PARTIALLY TO TIREDNESS AND TO INDIGNATION AT
BEING IMMEDIATELY GREETED WITH THIS SUBJECT UPON RETURN
FROM MAJOR STATE VISIT. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN IF HIS
IRRITATION WILL BE TRANSLATED INTO ANY CONCRETE ACTIONS.
GOWON'S BELIEF THAT HE WAS ULTIMATE OBJECT OF CAMPAIGN
AGAINST HIS LIEUTENANTS REFINED AND ECHOED MORE
STRONGLY HIS PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED FEAR THAT CONTINUATION
OF THESE PUBLIC ATTACKS WOULD DESTROY COUNTRY'S FAITH

IN HIS INTEGRITY (LAGOS 8459). INTERESTINGLY, THOUGH,
HIS ANGER THIS TIME DID NOT APPEAR DIRECTED AGAINST
PRESS, BUT RATHER TOWARD "TROUBLE-MAKERS" (AND THEIR
PRESUMED SUPPORTERS) WHO HE ALLEGES HAVE USED LEGAL
AFFIDAVITS AND PUBLIC MEDIA TO ENDANGER NATIONAL
UNITY AND STABILITY. NONETHELESS, HIS REMARKS
ARE LIKELY TO ENCOURAGE OTHER FEDERAL AND STATE
OFFICIALS IN TAKING HARD-LINE IN DEALING WITH PRESS.
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